



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
• Silver Spring, MD 20910

CLARIFICATION NOTICE

NMFS Requests Comments on the Issuance of Exempted Fishing Permits, Scientific Research Permits, Display, and Charter Permits for the Collection of Atlantic HMS

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is notifying the public of and soliciting public comment on its intent to consider applications for and issue Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Scientific Research Permits (SRPs), Display, and Chartering Permits for the collection of Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) (Section 635.32(e)). These EFPs, SRPs, and Display Permits would authorize collections of a limited number of tunas, swordfish, billfish, and sharks from Federal waters in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico for the purposes of scientific data collection and public display. NMFS may also issue permits for the purpose of collecting biological samples from at-sea observer programs. In addition, exempted fishing applications would be considered for bycatch reduction research in closed regions of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea to test gear modifications and fishing techniques aimed to avoid incidental capture of non-target species. In general, any exempted fishing permits would be valid through December 31, 2006.

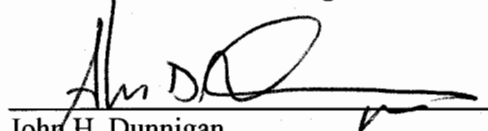
CLARIFICATION: To date, NMFS has not received any applications to conduct bycatch reduction research in any HMS-related closed areas during 2006. Any proposed research activities that have not been previously analyzed would likely require further analyses according to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as well as solicitation of additional public comment.

NMFS may issue Chartering Permits to U.S. vessels targeting Atlantic HMS while operating under contract within the Exclusive Economic Zone of other nations. Chartering Permits allow U.S. fishing vessels to fish consistently with another country's regulations without violating U.S. regulations, and ensures that such vessels report to the proper authorities.

Written comments on these collections, research, and fishing activities will be considered by NMFS when issuing EFPs, SRPs, Display, and Chartering Permits if received on or before 5 p.m., eastern standard time, on December 29, 2005.

Please send comments regarding NMFS's intent to consider and issue EFPs, SRPs, Display, and Chartering Permits for the collection of Atlantic HMS to Margo Schulze-Haugen, Chief, Highly Migratory Species Management Division (F/SF1), NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The permit applications and copies of the regulations pertaining to EFPs, SRPs, Display, and Chartering Permits may also be requested from this address. Comments also may be sent via facsimile (fax) to (301)713-1917 or by email to ID110905B@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the email the following identifier: I.D. 110905B.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to individuals interested in HMS fisheries activities to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information contact Heather Stirratt at (301) 713-2347.



John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

12/01/05
Date

